



School Liaison Program

Military-connected students move from school system to school system about three times more often than other students. Because of the frequent moves, it's important to focus on promoting the academic and social success of our children. It's vital to helping them become well-adjusted, well-educated, productive citizens. Our job as parents and as a community is to help our children through these transitional periods by supporting them and providing them with the resources they need in order to be successful.

With the Army (and Department of Defense) committed to addressing school and transition issues of the mobile military child, the Army has tasked the School Liaison Officer to manage, coordinate, and facilitate education support services that maximize the opportunity for academic success for military children through the support of Child and Youth Services and other programs like the Exceptional Family Members Program (EFMP).

The school liaison vision is: “Leveling the playing field” for transitioning military children and youth and our mission is: “To enhance readiness and well-being by reducing conflict between mission and parental responsibilities.” In other words, my job as the School Liaison Officer is to assist military families with school and transition issues through providing information, making referrals, and educating families about the school systems in the area. There are resources available to aid military families in navigating the school system and facilitating a smoother educational transition.

My responsibilities as SLO include informing and advising command, informing and assisting military families with school and transition issues, coordinating with the local school systems, and forging the partnership between the Fort Polk community and the Vernon Parish School System. As the School Liaison Officer, I face a range of issues concerning schools and military children’s education. In dealing with these concerns, it’s important to understand that I am not a “problem fixer.” I am a resource that provides you with

information. I can put you into contact with individuals or groups that can appropriately address your issue. I can set up meetings. I can even attend the meetings with you if you like and I'd be more than happy to do that.

Communication plays a vital role in establishing and maintaining a successful relationship between you and your child's school.

Therefore, please make every effort to get acquainted with your child's school and the people within that school. Get involved.

Volunteer. Join the PTO. Put in an application to become a substitute teacher. Volunteer to be a School Liaison Representative. The more actively involved in your child's education process you are, the more successful the experiences will be for you. Get to know your child's teacher. After all, your first POC is your child's teacher. If you have a concern, make an appointment with the school. If a resolution cannot be reached with the teacher, then address your concern to the administration at your child's school. If you still have a concern, call my office and we will put our heads together and decide what our next

course of action will be, but please give the school an opportunity to work with you first to come to a feasible solution for everyone concerned.

Some of the programs that the SLO sponsors are: Town Hall Meetings, Education Forums, conferences that are provided through the Military Child Education Coalition, School Liaison Board meetings and a variety of other Command functions. We are part of Newcomer's, the Special Needs Resource Team (SNRT), Parent Advisory Board, Community Action Council; I attend VPSB meetings along with the Garrison Commander and a host of other activities and events sponsored through JRTC and Fort Polk. The School Liaison Program falls under the Child and Youth Services umbrella so there are a variety of programs that are available to you.

Presently there are nearly 3600 military children in the Vernon Parish school system and approximately 70 in the public school system in Beauregard Parish. Fort Polk and Vernon Parish have established a great working partnership that has resulted in recent

improvements in educational opportunities for our children. The JRTC and Fort Polk along with the Vernon Parish School personnel have worked diligently to improve the quality of educational opportunities for our military children. The process is sometimes challenging, but the mission is great. The mission is the academic welfare of the students in Vernon Parish. We have accomplished many of the objectives that were set before us (i.e. redesigning the Vernon Parish website, offering Advance Placement courses, and adjusting the gifted policy) and we still have educational goals that we will continue to pursue. Dr. Gillespie, VP Superintendent, has been tireless in her efforts to partner with Fort Polk to ensure optimum educational opportunities for our military children. Dr. Gillespie's motto for this school year has been: Every child, every day, whatever it takes. The Command and the School Liaison Office join Dr. Gillespie in her efforts to provide our children with whatever it takes in order for them to be successful!

If you need information regarding your child's school or if you have a concern, feel free to call my office at 531-9481. Thank you.

